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SUBJECT: SOUTH SULAWESI: ELECTION RESULTS ARE IN, THE LOSERS SUE,
CLASHES STAY SMALL

REF: SURABAYA 72; SURABAYA 57

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This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The November 16 official announcement of election results failed to dampen controversy surrounding who won the race for South Sulawesi Governor. Now abandoned by national Golkar Party leadership, defeated incumbent Amin Syam and Vice Governor candidate Mansur Ramly have announced intentions to file suit in Indonesia's Supreme Court. The Provincial Election Commission has given all losing candidates a deadline of November 19 to file suit over alleged irregularities. Tensions have escalated since announcement of the razor thin (0.76 percent) margin of victory. Minor altercations between campaign supporters over the past 11 days have been kept under control by police. Signs point toward a long court battle rather than a battle on the streets. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On November 16, the Provincial Election Commission (KPU) formally announced that challenger Syahrul Yasin Limpo and Agus Arifin Nu'man had been elected Governor and Vice Governor, respectively, of South Sulawesi. When making the announcement, the KPU stated that the losing candidates would have three days, until November 19, to file law suits challenging the results to the Supreme Court. Representatives of defeated incumbent Amin Syam and third-place challenger Abdul Aziz Qahhar Mudzakkar refused to sign the final vote tallies on November 15, claiming their complaints about election irregularities had not been investigated by KPU. (Surabaya 72)

Incumbent Blind Sided by the People and His Party -- Golkar

¶3. (SBU) In public comments, defeated incumbent Amin Syam was unbowed; "I don't want to lose to cheaters." He insisted that there were serious irregularities during the election that went uninvestigated by the KPU and urged the South Sulawesi Elections Commission to postpone official announcement of the results. Amin Syam also criticized the national Golkar leadership for "carelessness" in issuing a statement accepting defeat in South Sulawesi without consulting him. Vice President and National

Golkar Party Chairman Jusuf Kalla accepted Syahrul's victory, calling it an "all Golkar final" and glossing over his very public support for the losing candidates (Surabaya 57). Now abandoned by his party, Syam clings to the hope that the Supreme Court will see things his way. Local media commentators wondered aloud how Kalla could still harbor ambitions for President when he appeared tone deaf to politics in his home province.

Scattered Altercations But Nothing Widespread

14. (SBU) Some 100 supporters of Amin Syam rioted at the offices of the Election Monitoring Committee (Panwaslu), on November 15, according to local media reports. The building also houses the Indonesian Journalist Association (PWI). The mob broke windows and some hit passing cars with sticks and their fists. Police arrested three men believed to be the provocateurs of the incident. Also on November 15, some hundreds of supporters of the incumbent demonstrated outside a Makassar country club where final confirmation of the votes was taking place under the eyes of representatives from the candidates. Some of the demonstrators held signs criticizing corruption and calling for new elections in three districts: Gowa, Takalar, and Tana Toraja, according to media reports. An NGO representative in Makassar familiar with the election told us that he feared more violence. Police have been successful to date in preventing clashes between groups of supporters.

What We Saw on Election Day

15. (SBU) On election day November 5, Pol/Econ officer, Pol/Econ Assistant and Political Officers from Embassy Jakarta visited two polling stations (TPU) in Makassar, guided by the local head of the KPU Mr. Mappinawang. The arrangements and atmosphere at both places suggested a well-organized effort. We left the KPU offices, guarded by twenty-odd Provincial Police armed with rubber bullets and teargas grenade launchers, to visit TPU in

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two parts of Makassar. Each TPU is responsible for collecting votes from roughly five to eight hundred voters. In the 20 minutes we spent at one polling place just before noon, only three or four voters cast ballots. KPU workers explained that nearly all people on the station's register had voted soon after the polls opened. Scattered protests regarding voter registration did not become widespread on Election Day according to our observation, KPU officials and media reports.

16. (SBU) The challenges facing voter education were clear during our visit. Near one polling station in a Makassar suburb, a man who lives next door to a polling station spoke with us outside his home. He said he had been refused his right to vote and showed us his voter registration card from the 2004 presidential election. He didn't understand why it was now invalid. KPU Head Mappinawang had earlier told us that basic ignorance of the process was the real cause of protests during the election. Rumors of a mid-election change in law in which the national identity card (KTP) would be accepted at polling stations only accelerated the flow of puzzled and ineligible voters to polling places. Leaders at one mosque had told people assembled for prayers that regulations would be changed on Election Day, according to Mappinawang, who was unclear regarding the specifics of the rumor.

17. (SBU) KPU efforts to educate voters were evident around the city on Election Day. While driving between polling places we saw banners near two intersections explaining the need to reregister for the current election. Mappinawang told us that radio and television reminders regarding the need to register were frequent in the run-up to Election Day. The KPU Head also lamented the poor accuracy of 2004 voter data provided by the Province's Population Office and said the outdated rolls were causing considerable confusion. He hoped that the 2009 election will use new data and that its collection will be in the hands

of the KPU rather than local officials

Press Coverage of Our Visit

18. (U) Our visit to Makassar polling stations was reported on election night on TVRI South Sulawesi, and several local newspapers the following day. National coverage of our visit appeared in Tempo magazine's online service TempoInteraktif, and the GOI's official news service, Antara. Many Makassar residents expressed curiosity about any US official interest in helping one or another candidate get elected. In an effort to avoid the appearance of interference in the process, we avoided visiting a polling station near the Governor's residence.

MCCLELLAND